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TAGS: [EAID](#) [EAGR](#) [OVIP](#) [PGOV](#) [LT](#)

SUBJECT: LESOTHO: USAID ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR ASSESSES FOOD
SECURITY

¶1. SUMMARY: From September 22-24, USAID Assistant Administrator for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance Michael Hess visited Lesotho to assess food security and to review the USG's ongoing response to recent drought and failed harvests. Accompanied by Emboff, the Hess delegation consulted with C-SAFE partners (World Vision, CRS, and CARE); visited USAID-funded program areas in Mafeteng and Mohale's Hoek districts; attended a dinner with donors, NGOs, and GOL representatives hosted by Charge; and consulted with the World Food Programme. END SUMMARY.

Instructive Field Visits

¶2. USAID Assistant Administrator Michael Hess, accompanied by Disaster Operations Specialist Chris Pratt, Special Assistant Amber Brooks, Regional Food for Peace Officer Pat Diskin, and Emboff met on September 23 with representatives of the NGO consortium C-SAFE in Maseru for a briefing and site visits. The C-SAFE consortium, comprised of CARE, Catholic Relief Services, and World Vision, serves as a major conduit for USAID-supplied food aid to rural communities in Lesotho. After their briefing, C-SAFE officials escorted the delegation to program sites in Mafeteng district. At these site visits, the delegation observed keyhole gardens, trench gardens, and other conservation agriculture techniques promoted through "food-for-assets" programs in rural communities. Program participants uniformly noted that they experienced better agricultural results than their neighbors who used more traditional farming methods.

Dinner Discussions

¶3. On the evening of September 23, Charge hosted a dinner in honor of Assistant Administrator Hess which included representatives of donor missions, UN agencies, NGOs, and an official of Lesotho's Disaster Management Authority. Conversation centered on the GOL's response to the current food insecurity crisis.

Consultation with WFP

¶4. On the morning of September 24, A/A Hess visited World Food Programme (WFP) Country Director Bhim Udas and held a frank discussion about the WFP's activities in Lesotho, the nature of Lesotho's food insecurity crisis, and WFP's role in the UN system in Lesotho. Mr. Udas described WFP's role as larger than its mandate would imply, as it is the only UN organization with a national network and is thus tasked with a wide range of

missions. Mr. Udas stated that he was pleased with the donor community's response to date to WFP's flash appeal for food aid in Lesotho.

Thanks for Visiting

[15](#). COMMENT: The visit of Assistant Administrator Hess to Lesotho reiterated U.S. concerns about the current regional food insecurity crisis, as well as the need for coordination and information gathering/sharing in forming an efficient international response. Hess suggested that the U.S. Mission explore a mass media nutritional education outreach in Lesotho, and offered to explore possible funding streams. Embassy Maseru thanks A/A Hess for his timely visit. We look forward to continuing our productive cooperation with USAID FFP and OFDA to help ameliorate Lesotho's current food crisis and to identify appropriate activities as follow on to the disaster declaration issued in July 2007. END COMMENT.

[16](#). USAID/FFP Pretoria cleared this cable.

NOLAN